LECTURE 4.
Models of information processing and their influence on the political worldview: Postmodernism

The emergence and strengthening of the positions of technological worlds and the formation of nonlinear models of interactions with Popper's three worlds makes its own adjustments to the understanding of the political, social, economic, ideological, value situation in the global space. Therefore, the question arises of how to understand and shape the processes in these areas.

In this case, the question of theoretical languages that could be used for these purposes arises again. As the analysis of processes in the space of virtuality and its influence on society shows, the most suitable languages are languages and models belonging to the metaphysics of absence. Among them, one can note such interpretative models as Simulacrum and Hyperreality, Rhizome and Actor-Network Theory (ANT) in its interpretation applicable to the virtual world.

Simulacrum and hyperreality

The word "Simulacrum" (Latin simulacrum - likeness, copy) was first introduced into circulation by the French philosopher and sociologist Georges Bataille and later theoretical ideas about it were developed by Gilles Deleuze and Jean Baudrillard. Simulacrum in modern culture means "a copy without an original". In the metaphysics of presence, the simulacrum has a negative reputation largely due to Plato, who developed a three-level model of the hierarchy of images, which also extended to politics.

According to the ancient Greek philosopher, the hierarchy of images includes "eidos" (the original image), eikon (the exact, genuine likeness of the eidos, the icon image) and eidolon (that which only illusory, ghostly seems similar to the original, the idol image). Eidolon is the simulacrum as a product of endless degradation. In Latin, the property of the eidolon to be imaginary, apparent, was translated as "virtual".

According to Plato, Eidos is intelligible. In turn, Eikon and Eidolon can be both intelligible (imprints on the "wax" of memory or pictures on the "canvas" of the soul) and observable things with physical vision (paintings, sculptures, shadows, reflections).

For Plato himself, the simulacrum is "a satyr, a centaur, or Proteus, who creeps everywhere, interferes with what is not his business, creeps in unnoticed and rubs himself into everything." By solving the problem of the simulacrum, Plato ensured the triumph of the copy.

For Deleuze, Plato's main motive comes down to solving the problem of "suppressing simulacra, keeping them at a depth, protecting them from floating to the surface and from the ability of simulacra to "creep" into anything."

Another classic of French postmodernism (philosophy of absence), Jean Baudrillard, defines simulacrum as follows: "A simulacrum is not something that hides the truth, it is the truth that hides that it does not exist. A simulacrum is the truth." Moreover, the source of this phrase itself is a simulacrum. Baudrillard designates as it "Ecclesiastes", a part of the

Bible, the authorship of which is attributed to King Solomon. Thus, in the case of Baudrillard's Ecclesiastes, we are dealing with a copy without an original and a copy that imitates the truth.

Simulacra add up to Hyperreality – a model of the real without the original and reality. Baudrillard's most famous example of simulacra and the hyperreal is Disneyland. In "Simulacra and Simulation" he writes: "Disneyland is a perfect model of all the intertwined categories of simulacra. It is, above all, a game of illusions and fantasies: Pirates, Frontier Territory, Future World, etc. This imaginary world is believed to be the reason for the success of the establishment. But what attracts crowds of visitors much more is the social microcosm, the religious enjoyment of a miniaturized real America with all its troubles and joys".

The processes of simulation call into question the distinction between the "true" and the "false", between the "real" and the "imaginary". Baudrillard asks himself: "Is the malingerer who exhibits "true" symptoms sick or not?", and he answers it himself: "Objectively, he cannot be considered either sick or healthy."

This is a kind of third state, which is hyperreal. Functionally, it is described by Baudrillard as follows: "It is no longer a question of imitation, not of duplication, not even of parody. It is a question of substitution, the substitution of the real with signs of the real, that is, of the operation of apotropaic every real process with the help of its operational copy."

The French philosopher pessimistically describes the prospects of the real, saying that it and even death as a fact of the real will never again have the opportunity to manifest itself, there will no longer be any distinction between the real and the imaginary. (p. 7).

It is in the space of signs that one of the demarcation lines between the philosophy of presence and the philosophy of absence passes. Here is what Baudrillard writes about this: "The transition from signs that hide something to signs that hide that there is nothing behind them marks a decisive turn. If the former refer to the theology of truth and mystery (which is still part of ideology), then the latter opens the era of simulacra and simulation, when there is no longer a God to recognize his own, and a Last Judgment to separate the false from the true, the real from its artificial resurrection, because everything has already died and been resurrected in advance." (p. 13)

Thus, within the framework of the philosophy of absence, we can no longer speak of the original, reality and copies in the Platonic sense. In fact, nothing but simulacra and the hyperreal, as a synonym for virtual reality, exists anymore. It is no longer the territory that precedes the map, but on the contrary, the map not only precedes the territory, but itself, in the form of a precession of simulacra, generates the territory. (pp. 5-6)

Taking into account that virtuality has a systemic influence on all 3 of Popper's worlds, a modern politician needs to perceive hyperreality as the most important factor of all possible fields in which politics operates. Simulacra, invading our lives through digital technologies and gadgets, can no longer be perceived negatively in the Platonic sense. People are immersing themselves ever deeper into the "non-Platonic real", with which a politician has to deal. For example, today it is difficult to perceive advertising from the point of view of the binary opposition "good - bad", since it is an integral part of the life of human society. And here we can

again turn to Baudrillard, who gave a wonderful comparison of the USA with Disneyland.

"Disneyland exists in order to hide the fact that Disneyland is in fact the "real" country - the whole of "real" America (approximately in the same way that prisons serve to hide the fact that the whole of society in all its fullness, in all its banal omnipresence, is a place of imprisonment). Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that everything else is real, while all of Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it are no longer real, but belong to the order of the hyperreal and simulation. It is no longer a question of a false representation of the real (ideology), but of concealing that the real has ceased to be real, and thus of saving the principle of reality."

Advertising as a space of simulacra and hyperreal

The modern advertising industry is a clear example of the generation of simulacra. "Baudrillard characterizes the current state of social processes as the production of not material things, but symbolic entities that refer to the same entities, forming a bizarre structure of self-reference."

Baudrillard writes that "To stimulate demand for goods, it is necessary to reveal desire, but to a certain limit, because instincts that are not restrained by anything are destructive at their core. Therefore, the task of advertising from the point of view of its social functions becomes the content and interpretation of desire within the framework of generally accepted norms of behavior. Things, crystallizing desire in themselves, simultaneously materialize the ritual-repressive function of the social order. The optimistic and conflict-free world of advertising claims that there is a solution for every problem: "Any tension, any individual or collective conflict can be resolved with the help of some thing".

The role of advertising is to promote models based on social myths that are neither false nor true from a social point of view, their task is not to provide educational or explanatory information to the consumer, but to give him hope of solving a certain problem by purchasing a certain thing.

Advertising and television process and filter every element of reality and turn it into a product ready for consumption. In such conditions, a person's everyday life is at the mercy of pseudopods and pseudostructures that simulate and at the same time destroy reality.

The rapid development of modern technologies that have penetrated the personal space of each individual has led to the emergence of "hyperreality" - a dimension in which a person finds himself. According to J. Baudrillard, hyperreality is a special kind of social reality in which its content is created or simulated through certain models or by reference to these models.

Buying things, a person strives for an ever-disappearing ideal. Advertising serves to establish and regulate this way of dealing with things, the purpose of which is not so much to promote the sale of a particular product, but to introduce into people's consciousness a holistic image of society, to "gift" its members with material goods.

Here I would like to cite the definition of happiness given by the famous Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Zizek: "Happiness is dreams of things that we do not want."

The process of turning the real into a simulacrum in advertising

According to Russian researcher Vladimir Emelin, Associate Professor of the Department of Psychology Methodology at Lomonosov Moscow State University, "Advertising is nothing more than a simulation... Advertising is a simulacrum due to the fact that it merges a thing and information. Advertising is not only a "discourse about things", but also a "discourse-thing". Advertising is a sign system, the source of which is simulation. It has a virtual existence.

The transformation of advertising into a simulacrum goes through several stages.

1. The first, or trivial stage of development. At this stage, "advertising only carries certain (reliable or not entirely reliable) information about a thing in order to ensure its sale." "Advertising at this stage is distanced from the object, there is always a gap between them, as between a sign and a referent."

2. At the second stage of development, "Advertising begins to create an image of a thing, that is, to endow it with qualities that are not initially inherent in it, or, by using certain techniques, to construct a special environment, an atmosphere in which the thing is immersed.

The latter no longer simply ceases to be an object offered to a potential buyer; it turns into a symbol, an image, with which a particular feeling, behavior, desire is associated. This is how trademarks are created, which have become more significant than the things themselves (form becomes more important than content, depth gives way to surface). The price is formed not in accordance with real costs, but based on the "virtual image of value" - a symbolic component, the formation of which is the responsibility of advertising. It is following this logic that people buying clothes from Diesel or Chavignon pay money not so much for the quality of the goods, but for the label, the name, which, ultimately, will become an indicator of belonging to a particular community.

Thus, already at this stage, advertising turns into a simulacrum, which contains not only information about the product, but also the qualities themselves, which determine the real cost of the product. The gap between the sign and the referent disappears. "

3. At the third stage, advertising is completely separated from the thing, it "acquires its own ontological status, becomes self-valuable, and, to the detriment of its original functions - to reflect and inform. When we begin to evaluate advertising not from the point of view of how it presents the product, but as an independent work of art, when we watch advertising as if it were a short film or a painting, completely forgetting about goods and purchases - then the sign that it once was becomes a referent that requires evaluation and correlation." Advertising, according to V. Emelin, should be understood not only as a simulation of the real, but also as a "desire machine" that produces fantasies, and therefore is directly related to human behavior. "Phantasm here is nothing more than a mental state that overtakes a person when reading an advertising image, and is accompanied by the illusion of individual freedom, the illusion of maternal care, the illusion of community, and, in fact, the illusion that he lacks something," he writes.

Memecoins as examples of money simulacra

An example of money turning into simulacra is memecoins - a cryptocurrency based on an internet meme, joke or trend. Unlike traditional cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin or Ethereum, memecoins usually do not have a serious technological basis or unique features. Their price is heavily dependent on hype, social media and celebrity influence.

Examples of popular memecoins:

Dogecoin (DOGE) is the most famous memecoin, created in 2013 based on a meme with a Shiba Inu dog.

Shiba Inu (SHIB) is a competitor to Dogecoin that appeared in 2020 and attracted the attention of investors.

Pepe Coin (PEPE) is based on the Pepe the Frog meme.

Bonk (BONK) is a dog memecoin based on the Solana blockchain.

RHIZOME

Another important aspect of understanding the mechanism of interaction between technological worlds and Popper's worlds is the principle of "Rhizome".

Traditionally, a human strives to build a metaphysics of presence, i.e. to reduce all the diversity of causes and effects to one cause and on its basis to build a static explanatory model of everything, within the rigid body of which the dynamics are enclosed. Postmodernist philosophers liken this model to a tree, which has a fixed root, trunk and crown. That is why it is called "arborescence", i.e., what relates to the shape and structure of the tree.

However, as poststructuralists have shown, behind the visible statics there is a more fundamental process of changes that do not stop even for a moment, synthesis, decay, struggle, divergence of development paths and their subsequent convergence, symbiosis and emergent evolution (the unexpected appearance of new properties in a system that are not inherent in its constituent parts, for example, consciousness). These are the worlds of nomads, who are trying to be made sedentary through the use of repressive tools of the metaphysics of presence. The descriptive models of this nomadic world are the Rhizome.

The concept of "rhizome", which is translated from French as "rhizome", was introduced into scientific circulation by the French poststructuralists and postmodernists Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. The rhizome is opposed to the usual tree root, which has a rod shape, and is an analogue of the chaotically intertwined rhizome of a mushroom, in which there is no clearly fixed center and the connections in which are built on a non-linear and non-hierarchical basis. In their cult work "Anti-Oedipus", J. Deleuze and F. Guattari cite four principles of the rhizome.

Principle 1. "Connection and heterogeneity". It means that "any point of the rhizome can and should be attached to any other point". The rhizomorphic structure is opposed to the tree-like hierarchical system. A tree is always a unity of roots, trunk and branches, which has upper and lower limits. A tree is a system of points and positions that fix its content. A tree is a succession, a transfer of properties from the center to the

periphery. A tree is hierarchical, logocentric and obeys a binary system. A rhizome has “no beginning, no end, no source, no destination, it is always in the middle.”

Due to the absence of a connecting center and boundaries, the growth of a rhizome is not limited by anything, although it is always surrounded and constrained by something. Like a weed surrounded by cultivated plants, it chaotically grows in all directions. As the pressure exerted on it increases, the radius of its growth expands. Thus, a rhizome can be spoken of as a decentered, non-hierarchical system subject to spontaneous mobility.

Principle 2. “Multiplicity.” It says: "In the rhizome there are no points or positions that we find in a structure, a tree or a root. There are only lines." As an example, illustrating the action of this principle, J. Deleuze and F. Guattari turn to the virtuosity of a musical work, where musical points turn into lines, thereby forming a certain integrity perceived by the listener as sound.

Multiplicities are opposed to Unity. Multiplicities are more fundamental compared to Unity, which arises when the signified seizes power in the multitude or when a process corresponding to subjectification takes place in it. The authors of Anti-Oedipus especially emphasize that "Unity always operates in the bosom of an empty dimension, additional to the dimension of the system in question (overcoding)." Unlike unity, multiplicity or rhizome does not allow itself to be overcoded, since it never has an "empty dimension" that is additional to the number of its lines (to the set of numbers associated with these lines). Multiplicities are flat because they fill and occupy all their dimensions.

Principle 3. "A-signifying rupture" means that it "can be broken, shattered in some place, it is renewed, following one or another of its lines, as well as following other lines. The rhizome is a constant rupture and a new assembly.

This principle is characterized by two states of the rhizome.

The first state is that any rhizome includes lines of Segmentarity. According to them, the rhizome is stratified, territorialized, organized, designated, attributed, i.e. they have a certain state of stability.

The second state, which exists simultaneously with the first, is the presence of lines of Deterritorialization (the line of flight), along which it constantly slips away.

The presence of these two lines leads to periodic ruptures in the rhizome. By "rupture" is meant a situation when the lines of segmentarity explode on the lines of flight, which "endlessly refer one to the other." It is because of this reference that “we can never give in to dualism or dichotomy, even in the rudimentary form of good or bad.”

Principle 4. “Cartography and decalcomania.” In explaining these principles, J. Deleuze and F. Guattari refer to the Tree, which is continuity, reproduction, reproduction of its points and positions, and therefore copying or tracing.

The rhizome cannot be traced, it is open, mobile and capable of self-organization, it is a map with multiple entrances.

“The map is open, it is capable of communication in all its dimensions, dismantled, reversible, it is subject to constant modifications. It can be torn apart, turned over, adapted to any means of assembly… The map has multiple forms, as opposed to tracing, which always refers to the “same thing.”

Calque is a mold incapable of modification and creation, copying the lines and contours that already exist. "Tracing paper no longer reproduces anything but itself when it thinks it reproduces something else. That is why it is so dangerous. It injects excess and multiplies it."

One example of the existence of Rhizome can be the virtual space of the Internet. First of all, this space is "Heterogeneous", it has the nature of a network community.

The Internet is a fundamentally open architecture, the routes of which, not being strictly deterministic, are constantly changing, and "coordination of local operations and synchronization of the result" does not depend on the center. The network community is based on horizontally oriented relations, not hierarchy.

The principle of "multiplicity of connections" in the global Internet is manifested in the non-linearity of the interrelations of the text, transforming it into hypertext. In hypertext, which has a rhizomorphic structure, new dimensions of the text universe are opened, in contrast to a linear text, the movement in which is limited to one plane. This principle allows the transition from one text to another without leaving the original text field.

The principle of "A-signifying rupture" in relation to virtual reality can be interpreted in another way. The virtual environment is a configuration of hyperlinks, alternative texts, bricolage, which performs a meaning-forming function only in the totality of its pieces, accordingly, the loss of any element is an "insignificant break". The principle of "cartography and decalcomania" is also applicable to the consideration of virtual space. Cyberspace, like a map, does not fit into strict frameworks; it does not have strictly regulated, fixed and unchangeable routes. It "is more reminiscent of a network of roads that constantly change their configuration: if some become overgrown, then others are built, and so on ad infinitum. Such constantly occurring changes do not allow the network to be static, identical to itself, even for some time, which excludes the possibility of its tracing".

ACTOR-NETWORK THEORY

As already noted, the virtual world created by digital technologies, as well as artificial intelligence, are increasingly invading all three of Popper's worlds. However, this invasion is not only along the lines of replacing biological consciousness or hybridization with technologies, as in the case of artificial intelligence, but also along the path of creating networks by analogy with the model proposed by Actor-network theory (ANT).

The recognized classics of ANT are Bruno Latour, Michel Callon and John Law, who proposed a completely new view of the world that goes beyond the orthodox idea of the metaphysics of presence about it within the framework of the "subject-object" dichotomy. In this construction, as one of the foundations of metaphysics, the leading role is played by the subject, and the object plays a subordinate and inert role. As a result, only the subject had the right to vote, and the object was just a mute thing on which scientific experiments were conducted.

However, ANT changed the status of objects, freeing them from the slavery in which they were imprisoned by the metaphysics of the Modern era. This phenomenon was called the "emancipation of things" or

"emancipation of objects of the material world." There is no longer a difference between a person (human) and a thing as representatives of living and non-living nature (nonhuman), they all become actants (French Actant - "acting"), equally influencing each other, being included in various networks.

In ANT, the division into human and non-human remains, but it takes on a different meaning, it is not automatically assigned to humans and things, respectively. Otherwise, ANT would be accused of preserving the subject-object dichotomy, which is a sign of the metaphysics of presence.

To defend itself against the accusation, ANT introduces three concepts: 1. Agnostic attitude; 2. Trials of strength; 3. The principle of symmetry of ANT.

1. Agnostic attitude

The agnosticism of Bruno Latour and his colleagues in ANT concerns the essence of actants and the position of those who study them: "We must not believe in advance that we know whether we are talking about subjects or objects, people or gods, animals, atoms or texts /…/ since this is precisely what is at stake between forces: who is speaking and about what?"

Here we see that the agnosticism of ANT is determined by anti-essentialism. Entities (essences) do not have properties in themselves, and all our assumptions about the properties of the acting forces before their interaction are meaningless.

2. Trials of strength

It is at the stage of action of this attitude that we learn who is human and who is non-human. As a result of the interaction of actants, it becomes clear what features this or that actant will acquire. "Subjects" and "objects" are no longer original categories, they are only the result of trials of forces. Also, after the trials of forces

There is an important point here. The acquired statuses or identities of actants after the test of strength do not remain forever. Maintaining identity will require constant effort and participation in interactions, otherwise the identity will disappear.

In other words, there is no clear division between subjects and objects, it is carried out anew each time.

An example of an embryo. As an example, the debates about at what stage of development the embryo ceases to be considered as simple biological material and begins to be described as a future person are suitable. In them, the boundary between the human and the non-human turns out to be very fragile, depending both on the interests of the persons involved and on the capabilities of medical equipment.

Another example is the problem of demarcation between living and non-living matter. Where is the demarcation line between chemical processes that can be attributed to living and non-living matter? In accordance with the logic of ANT, the division between living and non-living matter is reproduced anew each time.

Principle 3. "Symmetry"

Guarantees of impartiality must be enshrined in the methodology, in its vocabulary. To this end, Latour and his colleague Callon introduced the principle of symmetry: “…we require the observer to use the same repertoire when describing both nature and the social /…/ the rule we must observe is not to change the register [of description] when moving from the technological aspects to the social aspects of the problems being studied.”

ANT and the problem of the gap between society and nature

ANT also set itself the goal of eliminating the gap between Society with a capital S and Nature, which was established in the New Age. As evidence, they cite the discovery of microbes and the microbiological world invisible to the naked eye. It turned out that microbes and viruses are not only parts of nature, but also parts of society, actively influencing everything from the health care system to politics and the value system. The discovery of vaccination and penicillin can be seen as one of the tools that led to the transition from the world of Tradition to the world of Modernity and atheism.

To show that there is no gap between Society and Nature, they should not be viewed as a binary opposition, but from the point of view of technological networks. In his book "Pasteur. War and Peace of Microbes" Bruno Latour introduces the following epistemological principle: "The rigid separation of society and nature is illusory. Instead, we should analyze the relationship of forces, their interaction. These forces are not predetermined and are heterogeneous - people, animals, technical objects, ideas, words, etc. have the capacity to act." Latour emphasizes that "forces, or actors, gain stability only in alliances with other forces." Therefore, he put forward the scandalous thesis "Microbes did not "exist" before 1864 - until Pasteur "created" them, i.e., created technological networks that synchronized the "interests" of microbes and people.

Thus, according to ANT, there is no dichotomy of Society and Nature, but only Networks.

Actant-Network Relations in ANT

Consider two examples of actant-network relations.

The first example is the example of a car, given by Michel Callon. According to him, a car is the center of a web of relations between heterogeneous entities, which he calls a sociotechnical network. When a driver starts the car and drives it, he thereby starts a network of relations of humans and nonhumans participating in a collective action. Michel Callon indicates several participants in this action, among them oil companies refining oil and selling gasoline through gas stations, engineers, machine tools, workers, asphalt roads, refractory steel, tire rubber, traffic lights and many others. Thus, for a car to move, the participation of a large number of heterogeneous elements (actants) is necessary, the interaction of which constitutes a sociotechnical network.

The second example, which has become famous, is given by John Law, connected with the Portuguese galleon, which from the point of view of ANT

is itself a combination of networks, and is also simultaneously an actor in other networks.

According to the British classic of ANT, "a ship can be represented as a network - a network of hulls, spars, sails, ropes, guns, stores, cabins and the crew itself.

On the other hand, in a more generalized view, the navigation system, with all its ephemerides, astrolabes and quadrants, calculation tables, maps, navigators and stars, can also be considered as a network."

The Portuguese empire itself as a whole is also a network with its ports, storehouses, ships, military dispositions, markets and merchants.

John Law notes in this regard several very important points for understanding the existence of an object in ANT. He writes that a ship as an object remains an object as long as the relations between it and other objects connected to it are stable and all of them remain in their places. Therefore, actor-network analysis aims to "investigate the strategies that produce (and are in turn produced by) this objectivity, syntax or discourse that determines the place of the ship in the network of relations."

At the same time, in order to move away from understanding the network as static, Joe Law, referring to Bruno Latour, defines the galleon as "an immutable mobility", i.e. in it the network is represented by a combination of Dynamism and Immutability.

The ship is mobile because it moves, for example, from Lisbon to Calcutta, and at the same time, it is immutable, since during its movement it retains its form as a network unity.

Based on this, John Law concludes that the network metaphor operates on two levels of analysis. On the first level, "Immutable mobilities, being objects, are themselves networks, ensembles of relations." At the second level, the immutable mobilities are embedded in a network of relations with other objects and “if this network is broken, the ship ceases to be a ship, loses its network form, turning into something else.”